

WHY CHILDREN DIE.

A Talk with the Doctors.

Who Declare that Children Die by the Ignorance of their Parents,
Who Feed Them Too Much at the Wrong Time.

The question of the health of children is one of the most important matters which can arrest the attention of the people. There can be no doubt that much sickness and many deaths are the result of ignorance on the part of mothers who know nothing of the rules of hygiene and allow their children to indulge in a course of diet which can result only in the loss of health, and perhaps life. The Constitution presents this morning interviews with two prominent physicians of the city, who moved by professional ethics, declined to use of their names, but are willing to give the public the benefit of their knowledge. They are gentlemen who have the full confidence and respect not only of Atlantians, but of all Georgians, and their utterances are entitled to and always receive attention. In reply to a request for the best manner of caring for children during the summer months a kind M. D. looked benignly upon the reporter and answered:

"There is no question about the fact that one of the greatest sources of trouble with young children is the artificial food that is given them. There are many, however, who get along very well with artificial food. For children under two years of age where it is necessary to give food other than that furnished by the mother, there is nothing better than cow's milk. The great mortality among children of the age mentioned is caused by impure air, impure water and wrong dieting. The fact is already established that cholera infantum and diarrhoea in young children are due to impure food and impure air, coupled with the excessive and reflected heat, such as we have in the centre of the city. Heat is regarded as a fruitful source of indigestion and disease, especially the reflected heat which we have in the business portion of the city. In the suburbs the difficulty is not so great, and in some portions of the outskirts no greater trouble is experienced than is found in the small towns. In regard to diet, a child under two years old wants nothing as a rule, but milk, and sometimes a small quantity of bread and a little rice. Certainly no meats are suitable. They should eat no vegetables or fruit. When artificial food has to be given infants, dairies should not be relied upon, or any adulterated milks given. They should be given milk from cows that are not allowed to run at large and drink the poisonous waters of the sewer branches."

"What about exercise, doctor?"
"They should be kept in the open air, but not in the sunshine. It is astonishing to know the good results that follow sending children to the park or to Ponce de Leon springs. The exercise is reviving and should be taken advantage of. This applies to all children whose strength and age will allow it."

"How about bathing?"
"Children should be bathed twice a day—morning and night—in tepid water."

"Should they drink much water?"
"A moderate amount of pure water without ice."

"About the sleeping apartments and clothing?"

"They should be well ventilated, but no draught should blow upon the child. The bowel affections of the summer come instead of the colds of the winter. During teething a light flannel bandage should be worn over the bowels, and the other parts should be dressed very lightly, but changes in temperature should not be disregarded. These bandages are not to be worn while the child is in a healthy state."

"What should be done with children over two years of age?"

"They can eat almost anything in moderation except green fruits and such other things as reason and common sense teach us are not good for them. They should not be allowed to eat between meals, and can be allowed to eat ripe fruit at meal time. They should be given no ice water, as it greatly injures the digestive apparatus. Water should not sit where they can get at it too readily as they are likely to drink too much while heated from exertion while playing."

The second physician who was visited replied as follows to the queries that were propounded:

"There has been a great deal of sickness lately among children from one to two years old. The trouble is bowel affections, and I think the death rate has been more than usually large. The cause of the sickness has been the great change from cold to heat and imprudent diet. Feeding children under one year of age on an indiscriminate diet when it should have been mother's milk, or an exclusive milk diet, has been the trouble. Children from one to two years of age are fed on an indiscriminate diet when it should be chiefly of milk and light, farinaceous food. They should not be allowed to eat vegetables or fruits of any kind. Bread and milk should be the diet, and the milk should be selected with the greatest care. The milk in the city is bad. The cows drink the sewerage water, and the milk is rendered unfit for use among children. Where a child is to be brought up by hand a cow should be kept and milked three times a day, and the strippings given to the child. The strippings should

be well diluted with water—the younger the child the more water should be used. The object is to give the child the minimum of casine. The same result may be obtained by letting the milk stand half an hour, and drain off the upper half and give the other to the child. This is an important matter, and children kept on the milk diet will generally escape sickness. The great mortality comes from ignorance in dieting children. They should have water in moderation but no ice water. They should not eat too often—say once every three hours for a child under one year and for a nursing child every two hours. Over two years they should not eat so often. In regard to dressing, children should be well protected. They are often dressed too lightly but the dresses should be changed according to the temperature. Children should be sent into the open air freely morning and evening by sending them to the park or Ponce de Leon springs. When a child is sickly a change of locality is generally beneficial. These rules apply to healthy children. When children are sick of course the family physician should be called upon for instructions. Children over two years of age can eat some vegetables, such as Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes and rice, but no beans, cucumbers, beets, cabbages or radishes or anything of that kind. They can eat tomatoes or chicken soup once a day, and may also eat other soup. It is a bad habit for them to drink much water at a time. They should sleep in well ventilated rooms, but no draught should be allowed."

The third physician was asked what was the proportion of infantile mortality, and responded:

"The mortality reports of our cities from week to week show the appalling fact that one-third of all the deaths are children under one year of age."

"Why should this be—can it be prevented?"

"The trouble lies almost wholly in the manner of feeding. Ever since time began the great anxiety has been to keep the baby full of something from the time it comes into the world until its little body is carried to an early grave, or by some strange good luck survives this unnatural treatment until it reaches an age when an approach to regularity is exercised in its feeding. Why, during the first year children, as a rule, are stuffed early and late, hence the greatest mortality takes place at that age—a parallel to which cannot be found in animal creation. After this they are allowed more time between meals, hence a less proportion die."

"What is the proportion of deaths to age?"

"One-third of the deaths are children under one year of age, between one year and five years about one-fifth. After five years of age children are fed only three or four meals a day, and at regular intervals, and comparatively very few die between the ages of five and thirty. In other words, as the child grows, and is permitted to eat only when hungry, instead of being stuffed with any and everything at any and all times, its chances of life are improved. It is rarely the case that the child is not eating or vomiting alternately from morning until night. It is so invariably that it is regarded as altogether natural. It is expected that a child will throw up its food after taking it, and nurses declare it is all right. Nature revolts against such treatment of baby's stomach. Early and late, day and night, it is kept full and distended, and nature's effort to remedy the error is evinced by every hiccup and regurgitation."

"What is the result of this feeding?"

"Dyspepsia and its consequent train of infantile but formidable derangements. There can be no good reason why a baby should habitually throw up the food after feeding any more than a man should sit at table and stuff himself like a gourmand at old until he vomits."

"What would be your general remedy?"

"With right care as to feeding, clothing and cleanliness, but chiefly feeding, the death of a healthy born infant before two years of age would be so rare as to be a cause of wonder and comment. For the best results the infant's meals must be given at regular intervals of two, three and four hours, according to age, and nothing but milk should be given until the appearance of the teeth."

"The time for weaning cannot be fixed by the almanac, but must depend upon dentition. It should never be done suddenly, one regimen being gradually transformed into another, so that the child may be progressively prepared for the change in its dietetic habits. The child should never be weaned until the eruption of the teeth, but the intervals which occur between the cutting of the different sets of teeth should be selected. At whatever period weaning is begun, it should be done methodically, and nothing but milk given at first."

So you think that most infants die because they eat too soon and too much?

"Yes. We should discourage the pride of so many mothers that their infants 'can eat anything.' When this matter is generally understood, the rearing of children will be a delight in the household instead of a torment."

The following interview with a prominent New York physician is from a late number of the New York Sun:

"What is the chief cause of death in children?"

"Cholera infantum and analogous troubles carry off the bulk of them."

"And what is the cause of cholera infantum?"

"It may almost always be traced to food and drink and the manner of giving them. You would be surprised to know the number of children who are killed in the summer season by the carelessness or ignorance of mothers or nurses. The majority of infants who die in the summer season are those who are fed by the bottle; the milk used is often sour or partly so. Another prolific cause of their death, and an exceedingly important one, is the failure to provide them with a sufficiency of cool water to drink."

"What percentage of deaths would you be willing to say takes place from that cause?"

"It has been said by those who have carefully examined the statistics that during hot weather the deprivation of water has brought about a larger number of cases of death than all other causes combined. They are always too much warmed up, and in any case would perspire very freely. The water lost by perspiration must be supplied. As Dr. Murdoch stated in his paper on 'Cholera Infantum,' 'The child is thirsty not hungry; but not getting the water, it drinks the milk, which it does not want.' The consequence is that the stomach is overloaded with food which it cannot digest and which soon ferments and becomes a source of severe irritation. Then follows vomiting, purging and cholera infantum."

"How would you remedy this evil?"

"Have water—without ice—always accessible to the child, who will then refuse sour milk and will eat only when hungry. Water is the great indispensable article for the preventive treatment of children in hot weather. It is important enough to nursing children, but it is life itself to those reared on the bottle. The result of its judicious use is that they will then take milk only when it is sweet and will drink it only in such quantities as they will be able to digest."

"Are infants likely to take too much water?"

"Not without they are overheated, and a child who drinks often of water is much less likely to get overheated than one who is deprived of it. A child must be watched, of course. As a rule, its instinct is its best guide. It is only in the grown up child that the animal instincts become vitiated and unreliable. You may state with entire confidence that the free giving of water is, in a majority of cases, a potent preventive against the terrible scourge of cholera infantum."—Atlanta Constitution.

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